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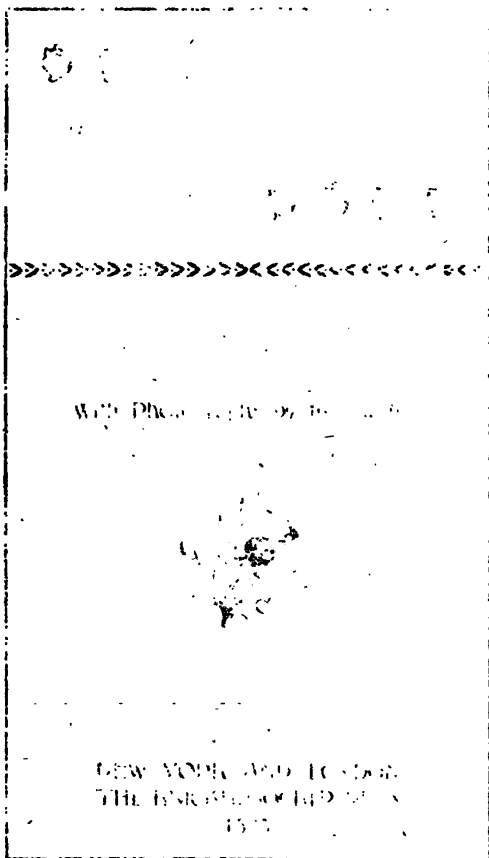








Robt. Bowne



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The Ayrshire  
Homes and Haunts  
of Burns



BY HENRY C. SHELLEY

With Photographs by the Author



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W. S. C. 13,04

# THE AYRSHIRE HOMES AND HAUNTS OF BURNS



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## THE AYRSHIRE HOMES OF BURNS

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“ JEAN, one hundred years hence, they ’ll  
think mair o’ me than they do now.”

Burns’s prophecy has been amply fulfilled. The centenary of his birth was celebrated in 1859 with an enthusiasm and universality almost unrivalled in the annals of literature.

“ City vied with clachan, peer with peasant, philanthropist with patriot, philosopher with statesman, orator with poet, in honouring the memory of the Ploughman Bard.” In the year 1896, which marked the centenary of his death, the commemoration of that event did not lack any of the hero-worship which characterised the celebration of 1859. But that hero-

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

worship has taken a different form. The Burns admirers thirty-seven years ago expressed their feelings through public meetings, dinners, suppers, and balls; they held their parliament, as Emerson expressed it on the occasion, "with love and poesy, as men were wont to do in the Middle Ages." But a new method of celebrating the sons of genius has arisen. Every line they wrote is subjected to scrupulous editing; their lives are studied by the search-light of diligent criticism; their homes and haunts are delineated by pencil and camera. Personality is the keynote of the method which has replaced that of 1859.

Burns lived for thirty-seven years, and he spent twenty-seven of them in Ayrshire. A line drawn on the map of that county from Irvine in the north to Kirkoswald in the south, deflected through Kilmarnock, Mauchline, and

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

Dalrymple, embraces his homes and haunts prior to the triumphal appearance in Edinburgh. But Irvine, Kilmarnock, and Kirkoswald only retained the poet for a brief season ; the first was the scene of his disastrous attempt to learn flax-dressing, the second only claimed him while he was seeing his poems through the press, and the third witnessed his brief apprenticeship to the art of mensuration. Hence a more restricted line will include all of Ayrshire associated with the greater portion of Burns's life. It must start from Alloway, run out to Mount Oliphant, turn back and pass through Tarbolton, touch at Mossgiel, and end in Mauchline. A small theatre for great deeds.

Scotland's two greatest peasant writers—Burns and Carlyle—were both born in houses of their fathers' own building. In the case of

## **The Ayrshire Homes of Burns**

Carlyle's father, inasmuch as he was a mason, this is not particularly remarkable ; but the fact that Burns's father reared with his own hands the now famous cottage at Alloway is significant of much in the character of the man. From the days of his early manhood, when poverty drove him from home on his long search after the bare necessities of life, to the closing scene at Lochlea, William Burns was engaged in a never-ceasing struggle to wrest from the earth a fitting sustenance for himself and family, and the only remaining monument of any conquest he made is to be seen in the " auld clay biggin " where his immortal son was born.

Alloway was once a separate parish, but towards the end of the seventeenth century it was united with that of Ayr, from the town of which it is some two miles distant. The approach

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

from Ayr to Alloway is characteristically nineteenth century. Small semi-detached villas line the road on either side, and these fade away only to give place to the larger and more pretentious mansions of county magnates, with a race-course for a background. The Burns cottage itself has rather too much the air of a commercial show-place, with its conventional turnstile and persistent charge of twopence admission. There are relics in plenty scattered around, from the bed in which the poet was born, to the spinning-wheel of his mother ; but somehow the air seems stifling to the literary pilgrim, and he is glad to escape from the white glare of mediocre sculpture and the sheen of coffee urns—all duly displayed in the temperance refreshment-room attached to the cottage—to the freer atmosphere outside.

A few hundred yards down the road, in the

## The Ayrshire Domes of Burns

direction of the "banks and braes o' bonnie Doon," the gaunt gables of "Alloway's auld haunted kirk" rear themselves high in the air. At once the apposite remark of Nathaniel Hawthorne flashes across the mind: "Kirk Alloway is inconceivably small, considering how large a space it fills in our imagination before we see it." Its place in literature, as the scene of the midnight orgies witnessed by Tam O' Shanter, was secured by a mere accident. In the fall of the year 1790, one Captain Grose happened to be travelling through Scotland intent on antiquarian study. His path crossed that of Burns, who was then trying his last farming experiment at Ellisland, and the two soon became "unco pack and thick thegither." The poet one day pressed the claims of Alloway Kirk on the antiquarian's notice, and Captain Grose agreed to make a drawing

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

of the building on condition that the poet furnished an appropriate witch-story as comment. A bargain was struck, and the result was *Tam O' Shanter*.

From his childhood to his eighteenth year, Burns had been familiar with the old ruin, and his mind was stored with gruesome evil-spirit tragedies of which it had been the theatre. It was easy to draw upon these memories for his share of the bargain with Captain Grose, and not less easy, apparently, to immortalise the exploits of *Tam O' Shanter*, for the poem is said to have been written in a day. And now Kirk Alloway is only interesting for *Tam O'Shanter's* sake. All its associations with the joys and sorrows of past generations, its witnessings of baptism, marriage, and funeral, its memories of contrition and aspiration under the spell of Christian exhortation



## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

and promise, have faded away, and the ear of imagination loses the echoes of holy psalm in the skirl of that untoward music which fell upon the astonished ears of 'Tam O' Shanter.

The "winnock-bunker in the east," where sat the beast-shaped musician of that unholy revel, the opened coffins whence were thrust the pallid hands that held aloft the blazing torches, the "span-lang" bairns who gazed with wide-eyed amazement on the swiftly moving dance, the window which framed the absorbed face of 'Tam O' Shanter—these are the sights the eye seeks in Alloway Kirk. Outside its walls, and among the crowded graves which jostle each other with unseemly obstinacy in this scant God's-acre, the eye wanders in quest of William Burns's tomb.

The father of Robert Burns had a double right to a resting-place in the shadow of Kirk Allo-

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

way ; the right of the man whose son lifted it into the realm of poesy, and the right of the man who, years before, rebuilt the ruined walls of its graveyard. It was natural, then, that William Burns should wish to be buried in Alloway Churchyard, and when he at last laid down the burden of life at Lochlea in 1784, his widow and children did not hesitate as to where his dust should rest. The small headstone which was at first reared over the grave has given place to the more substantial memorial of the present day, on the back of which the son's affectionate tribute is inscribed :

“ O ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,  
    Draw near with pious rev'rence and attend !  
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,  
    The tender father, and the gen'rous friend ;  
The pitying heart that felt for human woe,  
    The dauntless heart that fear'd no human pride ;

## The Ayrshire Domes of Burns

The friend of man—to vice alone a foe ;  
For ' ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side.' ”

It was a lucky chance for Tam O' Shanter -  
that the river Doon and its “ auld brig ” were  
within easy hail of Alloway Kirk. That irre-  
pressible “ Weel done, Cutty-sark ! ” started  
the whole pack of midnight revellers at his  
horse's heels :

“ Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,  
And win the keystone o' the brig :  
There at them thou thy tail may toss,  
A running stream they dare na cross.”

The Doon has a new bridge now to bear the  
burden of nineteenth-century traffic, but the  
“ auld brig ” still spans the lovely river, an  
indubitable link between our own time and  
the stormy night of Tam O' Shanter's ride.  
Other memories than those of Tam O' Shanter  
crowd into the mind while musing by the side

### **The Ayrshire Domes of Burns**

of the clear-running Doon. Here are the shows of nature which were frail and vain to weep a loss that turned their lights to shade. Sacred through all time are these banks and braes to the memory of that disconsolate wanderer who reproached the birds for singing and the flowers for blooming, but had no harsh thought for that "fause lover" who had thrown her out of harmony with nature.

In Burns's seventh year the scene of his life shifted from Alloway to Mount Oliphant, a small seventy-acre farm some two miles distant. This was to be his home for more than ten years. The outward setting of Mount Oliphant is probably little different from what it was in the poet's day, though the farm buildings have necessarily been considerably remodelled and enlarged. The new era which opened for Burns with his removal thither

## The Hysbire Homes of Burns

was of far-reaching importance ; he confessed to Dr. Moore that it was during the time he lived on that farm that his story was most eventful. There, indeed, now from the worthy Murdoch, now from the lips of his remarkable father, and anon at the parish school of Dalrymple, he acquired most of the knowledge which teachers can impart, and there, too, he experienced " the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave."

One incident of the Mount Oliphant days revealed the deep tenderness of the poet's heart. It happened that Murdoch, the old teacher of Robert and Gilbert, visited the farm one night to take farewell of his friends ere leaving for another part of the country, and brought with him a copy of *Titus Andronicus* as a parting present to his pupils. When the day's work was done, and the family gathered to-

## **The Ayrshire Homes of Burns**

gether, Murdoch began to read the play aloud. He had got to the fifth scene of the second act, where Lavinia appears with her hands cut off and her tongue cut out, but when he reached the taunting words of Chiron, "Go home, call for sweet water, wash thy hands," the entire family besought him, with tears, to cease reading. The father remarked that if they would not hear the end of the tragedy it would be useless to leave the book, whereupon Robert at once struck in with the threat that if it were left he would burn it !

It was not without good cause that the poet complained of the hermit-like existence that fell to his lot on this farm. Gilbert says: "Nothing could be more retired than our general manner of living at Mount Oliphant; we rarely saw anybody but the members of our own family. There were no boys of our own age or near it in the

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

neighbourhood." This was not altogether a disadvantage. Burns was thus driven in upon himself, and to the study of such books as the family possessed or could borrow. But it was a hard life he lived at Mount Oliphant. He had to labour in the fields to an extent far beyond his strength, and to subsist on food of the poorest description. This continued to his fifteenth autumn, and then he awoke to love and poetry—henceforth the dual consolation of his life. It was harvest-time. In his work amid the golden grain it was the fortune of Burns to have for partner a "bewitching creature" a year younger than himself; "a bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass."

The hour had come which was to awaken the singing soul of Burns, and unseal that fount of lyric love in which all after-time was to rejoice. The story is best given in his own words: "In

## The Ayrshire Domes of Burns

short, she, altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below. How she caught the contagion I cannot tell; you medical people talk much of infection from breathing the same air, the same touch, etc. ; but I never expressly said I loved her. Indeed I did not know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from our labour ; why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an Æolian harp ; and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious ‘rat-tan,’ when I looked and fingered over her little hand to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles.

“Among her other love-inspiring qualities, she sang sweetly ; and it was her favourite



## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

reel to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine that I could make verses like the printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin, but my girl sang a song which was said to be composed by a small country laird's son, on one of his father's maids, with whom he was in love, and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he ; for excepting that he could sinear sheep and cut peats, his father living in the moorlands, he had no more scholar-craft than myself. *Thus with me began love and poetry.*"

Still, Mount Oliphant cannot have been a happy home for the Burns family. The poor and hungry soil of the farm entailed constant labour on every member of the family able to do a hand's turn, and with all their efforts no adequate recompense was forthcoming. Hence

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it must have been with a sigh of relief that they turned their back upon the scene of such hardships to make a new trial of life on the farm at Lochlea. This new home of Burns—where the next seven years of his life were spent—was situated in the upper part of the parish of Tarbolton. It lies in a hollow and took its name from a small loch, now no longer in existence. Take it for all in all, Lochlea was perhaps the happiest home the poet ever had. Life never moved more smoothly for him than during the first few years in Tarbolton parish, and as yet his ungovernable passions had not brought him into contact with kirk-sessions and the severer reprimands of his own conscience.

Gilbert Burns used to speak of this period as the brightest in his brother's life, and was wont to recall with delight the happy days they spent

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

together in farm work, when Robert was sure to enliven the tedium of labour with his unrivalled conversation. It was at Lochlea that the incident occurred which prompted *The Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie*, and in a low-lying field near the house the spot where that famous ewe nearly committed suicide is still pointed out. Other first-fruits of poesy were gathered during these peaceful days, and many of the seeds planted which were to yield such a prolific harvest at Mossgiel.

The village of Tarbolton, some two miles distant from Lochlea, naturally figures largely in this period of Burns's life. Its chief street still retains some continuity with the past. Sandwiched in here and there between houses of recent date may be seen many of the rough-cast, thatch-covered cottages common in the poet's time. Among modern buildings, the

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

most conspicuous are a public library and a masonic hall. The latter, which contains some valuable Burns relics, has not been erected many years, but is already permeated with dry rot and is in a filthy condition. The library contains about two thousand volumes, and the only Burns literature visible is an odd volume of a three-volumed edition of the poems ! It is not surprising, then, to hear the Tarbolton people frankly confess that they " take no interest in Burns."

There are various links connecting Burns with Tarbolton, one being recalled by that sentence in his autobiography which runs : " At the plough, scythe, or reap-hook, I feared no competitor, and set want at defiance ; and as I never cared further for any labours than while I was in actual exercise, *I spent the evening in the way after my own heart.*" The

## **The Ayrshire Homes of Burns**

beginning of this appears to have been attendance at a dancing-school in Tarbolton. Such institutions are still the common introductions to courtship in rural Scotland, and in the case of Burns there can be no doubt that his dancing-school experiences led to those innumerable love episodes which now began to bulk so largely in his history.

Gilbert Burns, writing of this period, says his brother "was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver," and David Sillar, a boon companion of the poet, remarks that he was frequently struck with Burns's facility in addressing the fair sex. The Lochlea loves have left their impress on his poems. The mansion house of Coilsfield—transformed by the poet to, and now known as, Montgomery Castle—is in the vicinity of Tarbolton, and two of its servants were fated to find immor-

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tality through the young farmer of Lochlea. The first was the heroine of *Montgomerie's Peggy*. She was housekeeper at Coilsfield, and Burns says of her that she was his deity for six or eight months. He adds: "She had been bred in a style of life rather elegant, but (as Vanbrugh says in one of his plays) my 'damned star found me out' there too; for although I began the affair merely in a *gaieté de cœur*, it will scarcely be believed that a vanity of showing my parts in courtship, particularly my abilities at a *billet-doux* (which I always piqued myself upon), made me lay siege to her. When—as I always do in my foolish gallantries—I had battered myself into a very warm affection for her, she one day told me, in a flag of truce, that her fortress had been for some time before the rightful property of another. I found out afterwards, that what

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

she told me of a pre-engagement was really true ; but it cost me some heartaches to get rid of the affair."

There is a tradition that Highland Mary—*i. e.*, Mary Campbell—was at one time dairy-maid at Coilsfield, and it is not improbable that Burns first made her acquaintance there. At any rate, the lovely rivulet Fail, which runs through the grounds of Montgomery Castle, mingles with the nature-background of his most famous song to Mary's memory :

“ Ye banks, and braes, and streams around  
The castle o' Montgomery !  
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,  
Your waters never drumlie :  
There Simmer first unfald her robes,  
And there the langest tarry ;  
For there I took the last Farewell  
O' my sweet Highland Mary.”

But there was another side to Burns's even-

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ings from home. Sociable by nature, he availed himself of every opportunity of convivial intercourse with young men of his own age and station. Hence the creation of that Bachelor's Club, where the topics for discussion seem to have been selected on the principle of consoling its members for their temporary absence from the fair sex. Hence, too, Burns's action in becoming a freemason. His initiation took place on July 4, 1781, and the old thatched cottage in which the ceremony took place still stands at the corner of the Mauchline road. It was at a meeting of the lodge that the idea of *Death and Dr. Hornbook* took shape. John Wilson, the Tarbolton schoolmaster, who eked out his scholastic earnings by amateur physicking, one evening paraded his medical knowledge in such an ostentatious manner that Burns resolved, on his way home,



## **The Ayrshire Homes of Burns**

to hold the dominie-medico up to ridicule. With what result the world knows. The scene of the dialogue between Burns and Death is laid just outside Tarbolton. Leaving the old Masonic Lodge on the right, the road winds "round about" a high mound, and then descends toward Willie's Mill. In the bank by the roadside, under the shadow of a hedge, local tradition points to a few rough, projecting stones as the seat where the poet and his gaunt friend "eased their shanks" while discussing the skill of Dr. Hornbook.

When William Burns died in 1784, the last link was snapped which held his family at Lochlea. Prior to that event, however, Robert and Gilbert had taken the farm of Mossgiel, "as an asylum for the family in case of the worst." With the removal to Mossgiel, the poet took a resolve to mend his ways and

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

address himself seriously to the work of life. "I read farming books," he said, "I calculated crops, I attended markets, and, in short, in spite of the devil, and the world, and the flesh, I believe I should have been a wise man ; but the first year, from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second, from a late harvest, we lost half our crops. This upset all my wisdom, and I returned like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

It is impossible to doubt that Burns really desired to settle down for himself. Already he had made several efforts in that direction, each of which had been remorselessly thwarted. He groped about for the clue which should enable him to unravel his life in an orderly fashion, but it was his misfortune always to lay hold of a loop in the skein, and by vio-

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

lent tugging at that to reduce the whole to a hopeless tangle. "The great misfortune of my life," he confesses, "was to want an aim." At first, Mossgiel promised to provide that aim. His father was dead; on him and his brother Gilbert had devolved the care of the widowed mother and her other fatherless children. But the trinity of evil proved too strong for the poet. The world, in the shape of convivial companions; the devil, in the form of bad seed and late harvests; the flesh, in the enchantments of love—these met Burns's resolution in a stern stand-up fight, and speedily won a complete victory. Hence it came to pass that the Mossgiel period was of crucial importance in the life of Burns; it made his weakness as a man and his powers as a poet patent to the world.

The farm of Mossgiel is situated in the parish

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

of Mauchline, from the town of which name it is about a mile distant. Whatever it may have been in the poet's time, it strikes the visitor in these days as a most desirable home. Although written more than sixty years ago, Wordsworth's sonnet is still accurate in its chief outlines :

“ ‘ There,’ said a Stripling, pointing with meet pride,  
Towards a low roof with green trees half concealed,  
‘ Is Mossgiel Farm ; and that ’s the very field  
Where Burns ploughed up the Daisy.’ Far and wide  
A plain below stretched seaward, while descried  
Above sea-clouds, the Peaks of Arran rose :  
And, by that simple notice, the repose  
Of earth, sky, sea, and air, was vivified.  
Beneath ‘ the random *bield* of clod or stone ’  
Myriads of daisies have shone forth in flower  
Near the lark’s nest, and in their natural hour  
Have passed away ; less happy than the One  
That, by the unwilling ploughshare, died to prove  
The tender charm of poetry and love.”

The house stands on a high ridge, some

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

sixty yards back from the road, and is screened with a stalwart thorn hedge, which the poet and his brother are said to have planted. Its walls have been considerably raised since it was Burns's home, and the roof of thatch has given place to one of slates. When Hawthorne visited it in 1857, and forced his way inside in the absence of the family, he found it remarkable for nothing so much as its dirt and dunghill odour. There is neither dirt nor odour to-day. The goodwife of the present occupant of Mossiel, Mr. Wyllie, keeps her house spotlessly clean, notwithstanding the demands made upon her time by innumerable inquisitive visitors. On the parlour table lies a copious visitors' book, and in the same room hang the manuscript of *The Lass o' Ballochmyle*, and the letter in which Burns asked Miss Alexander's permission to publish the song.

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

At the back of the house lies the field where Burns turned down the daisy, and the soil "seems to have been consecrated to daisies by the song which he bestowed on that first immortal one." Over the hedge, there, is the other field where the poet's ploughshare tore up the mouse's nest.

The neighbouring town of Mauchline is a central spot in the history of Burns. In its dancing-hall he first met Jane Armour, the inspirer of many of his deathless songs, and the destined wifely companion of his fortunes; under the roof of Poesie Nansie's hostel he saw the tattered vagrants whom his imagination transferred to the pages of literature in *The Jolly Beggars*; outside the old church he often witnessed those unseemly incidents so unsparingly satirised in *The Holy Fair*; Mauchline Castle was the home of his warm-

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

hearted friend, Gavin Hamilton, and the scene of several interesting events in his own life ; and in the churchyard sleep many whom he marked as targets for invective or subjects for eulogy. Perhaps because it is not quite such a rural outpost, Mauchline has changed more than Tarbolton. Still, there are many buildings which take the mind back to the poet's time, and in the main the topography of the place is practically unchanged. The Cowgate illustrates both facts. Here there are several houses which have changed but little during the past hundred years, and the position of the street, with the church at the end, provides an illuminating comment on that verse of *The Holy Fair* which records how

“ . . . Peebles, frae the water-fit

Ascends the holy rostrum :

See, up he 's got the word o' God,

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

An' meek an' mim has view'd it.  
While Common-sense has ta'en the road,  
An' aff, an' up the Cowgate  
Fast, fast that day."

At the corner of the Cowgate stands Poosie Nansie's hostel, bearing upon its gable-end the legend that it is "'The Jolly Beggars' Howf.'" In the time of Burns this cottage was a lodging-house for vagrants, and it seems that the poet and some of his companions were wont to drop in occasionally late at night to see the maimed and the blind in their undress of sound limbs and opened eyes.

" Ae night, at e'en, a merry core  
O' randie, gangrel bodies,  
In Poosie Nansie's held the splore,  
To drink their orra duddies.  
Wi' quaffing an' laughing  
They ranted an' they sang;  
Wi' jumping an' thumping,  
The vera girdle rang."



## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

Another resort of Burns in these Mauchline days has honourable mention in one of his early poems. Towards the close of *The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer*, he exclaims :

“ Tell yon guid bluid o’ auld Bonconnock’s,  
I ’ll be his debt twa mashlum bonnocks,  
An’ drink his health in auld Nanse Tinnock’s  
                    Nine times a week,  
If he some scheme, like tea and winnocks,  
                    Wad kindly seek.”

In a footnote to the name of Nanse Tinnock the poet explained that she was “ a worthy old hostess of the author’s in Mauchline, where he sometimes studied politics over a glass of guid, auld Scotch drink.” Nanse Tinnock’s house may still be seen down a narrow lane leading towards the churchyard, and opposite is the cottage where Burns is said to have “ taken up house ” with Jean Armour.

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

From the windows of this cottage a good view is obtained of Mauchline Castle, in the business room of which Burns is reputed to have been married. The castle has undergone little or no change these hundred years, and it is easy to recall that Sabbath morning when the worthy Gavin Hamilton, petitioned by his children for some new potatoes for dinner, instructed his gardener to dig a few, little thinking that the eyes of the "unco guid" were upon him and that the Mauchline kirk-session would bring him to book for such sacrilegious fatherly indulgence. Facing the head of the main street the visitor observes a building-block divided into several houses, and his interest in it is quickened when he learns that the house at the near corner was the home of the Morrisons. From this house to the churchyard is but a few steps, and one of the

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

first tombstones to arrest his attention reads thus : " In memory of Adj. John Morrison, of the 104th Regiment, who died at Mauchline, 16th April, 1804, in the 80th year of his age ; also his daughter Mary—the Poet's Bonnie Mary Morrison—who died 29th June, 1791, aged 20." Other tombstones bear names or are linked with memories of men and women just as familiar. In a far-off corner, with a white-washed wall for background, stands the memorial of the Rev. William Auld, better known to fame as the " Daddie Auld " of *The Kirk's Alarm*. By its side lie the ashes of Johnnie Richmond, that Mauchline friend of Burns who was his first host in Edinburgh. A time-worn slab marks the grave of William Fisher, that village Pharisee whose after life and death justified the *Prayer* Burns put in his mouth. The inscription has faded away,

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

but every reader of Burns can supply the epitaph :

“ Here Holy Willie’s sair worn clay  
Taks up its last abode ;  
His saul has ta’en some other way,—  
I fear, the left-hand road.”

Not far away from Holy Willie’s grave is the lair of Gavin Hamilton, enclosed with a simple iron railing, but devoid of any memorial stone. Such was the wish of that worthy lawyer, and hence his epitaph must be sought in the pages of Burns :

“ The poor man weeps—here Gavin sleeps,  
Whom canting wretches blam’d ;  
But with such as he, where’er he be,  
May I be sav’d or damn’d ! ”

Adjoining the end of the church is the burial-place of the Alexanders of Ballochmyle, the top-marble tablet on the left hand commemorat-

## The Ayrshire Homes of Burns

ing the laird of the poet's time. One other grave of interest is that of the Armour, from whose family Burns chose his wife, and under the prostrate stone within these railings the infant daughters of the poet are buried.

One of the favourite walks of Burns was among the braes of Ballochmyle, some two miles distant, and no poet could have made a better choice in the Mauchline countryside. Close by, the river Ayr runs its turbulent course, and between the two he had copious material for poetic thought. But, somehow, it is humanity rather than nature which asserts its supremacy while wandering among the Ayrshire homes and haunts of Burns. It is fit it should be so, for a large part of the world's debt to Burns consists in the fact that he made common life classical. To coin quotable couplets out of the ordinary

## The Ayrshire Domes of Burns

incidents of lowliest lives was his prerogative. The world sadly needed teaching to make an ideal out of its actual, and that lesson he taught. The annals of the poorest peasant's life are now as immortal as the exploits of Hector or the victories of Achilles. Little things have become great things since Burns sang of them. The mouse is a demi-god now ; the daisy a flower of paradise. The oft-returning Saturday night of the cottar is no longer the common thing it was ; it is a sacrament of life.

Fresh links of sympathy and love between man and beast have been forged by the pen of Burns, and even the food on our tables—the “halesome parritch, chief o’ Scotia’s food,” and haggis, “great chieftain o’ the pudding race,”—is as the ambrosia of the immortals. Burns achieved the apotheosis of

## **The Ayrshire Homes of Burns**

common life, and the height of that achievement can nowhere be better measured than among his Ayrshire homes.



## THE AYRSHIRE HOMES OF BURNS

[ 41 ]





THE POET'S BIRTHPLACE, ALLOWAY.

“ WITH secret throes I marked that earth,  
That COTTAGE, witness of my birth.

. . . . .

“ There was a lad was born in Kyle,  
But whatna day o' whatna style,  
I doubt it 's hardly worth the while  
To be sae nice wi' Robin.

“ Our monarch's hindmost year but ane  
Was five-and-twenty days begun,  
'T was then a blast o' Janwar win'  
Blew hansel in on Robin.”

**THE POET'S BIRTHPLACE, ALLOWAY.**





## ALLOWAY'S AULD HAUNTED KIRK.

“ **W**HEN, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,  
Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze ;  
Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing,  
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

. . . . .

“ But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,  
Till, by the heel and hand admonish'd,  
She ventur'd forward on the light ;  
And, wow ! 'Tam saw an unco sight !  
Warlocks and witches in a dance :  
Nae cotillon brent new frae France,  
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,  
Put life and mettle in their heels.  
A winnock-bunker in the east,  
There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast ;  
A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,  
To gie them music was his charge :  
He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl,  
Till roof and rafters a' did dirle.”

**"ALLOWAY'S AULD HAUNTED KIRK,"**

**[ 48 ]**





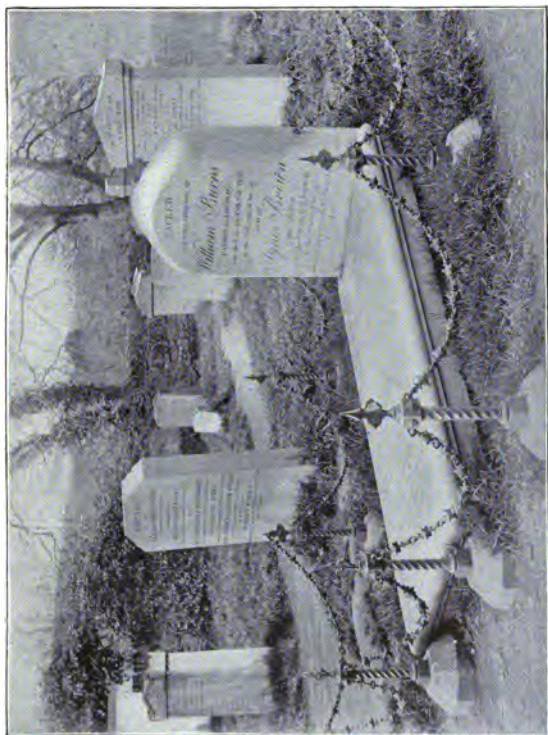


THE GRAVE OF BURNS'S FATHER.

“ **O**H, ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,  
Draw near with pious rev'rence and attend !  
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,  
The tender father, and the gen'rous friend ;  
The pitying heart that felt for human woe,  
The dauntless heart that feared no human pride ;  
The friend of man—to vice alone a foe ;  
For 'ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side.' ”

**THE GRAVE OF BURNS'S FATHER**

**[ 52 ]**





THE AULD BRIG O' DOON.

“ **Y**E banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,  
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?  
How can ye chant, ye little birds,  
And I sae weary fu' o' care!  
Thou 'lt break my heart, thou warbling bird,  
That wantons thro' the flowering thorn:  
Thou minds me o' departed joys,  
Departed never to return.

. . . . .

“ Aft hae I rov'd by bonnie Doon,  
To see the rose and woodbine twine:  
And ilka bird sang o' its Luve,  
And fondly sae did I o' mine.”

**"THE AULD BRIG O' DOON."**

**[ 56 ]**







## MOUNT OLIPHANT.

“ O H, once I loved a bonie lass,  
Ay, and I love her still ;  
And whilst that virtue warms my breast,  
I 'll love my handsome Nell.

. . . . .

“ She dresses aye sae clean and neat,  
Both decent and genteel :  
And then there 's something in her gait  
Gars onie dress look weel.

“ A gaudy dress and gentle air  
May slightly touch the heart,  
But it 's innocence and modesty  
That polishes the dart.”

---

The above stanzas are from Burns's first love song, written at Mount Oliphant.

**MOUNT OLIPHANT.**

**[ 60 ]**





## LOCHLEA.

“ **M**Y father was a farmer  
Upon the Carrick border, O,  
And carefully he bred me  
In decency and order, O ;  
He bade me act a manly part,  
Though I had ne’er a farthing, O,  
For without an honest manly heart,  
No man was worth regarding, O.

. . . . .

“ No help, nor hope, nor view had I,  
Nor person to befriend me, O ;  
So I must toil, and sweat, and moil,  
And labour to sustain me, O,  
To plough and sow, to reap and mow,  
My father bred me early, O ;  
For one, he said, to labour bred,  
Was a match for Fortune fairly, O.



## Locblea

“ Thus, all obscure, unknown, and poor,  
Thro' life I 'm doomed to wander, O,  
Till down my weary bones I lay,  
In everlasting slumber, O.  
No view nor care, but shun whate'er  
Might breed me pain or sorrow, O ;  
Alive to-day as well 's I may,  
Regardless of to-morrow, O.”



**LOCHLEA.**

**[ 66 ]**



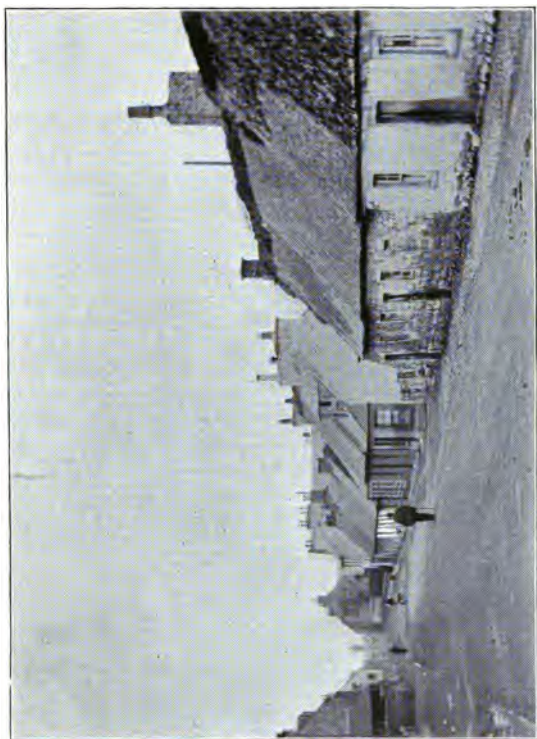


TARBOLTON.

“FROM scenes like these, old Scotia’s grandeur  
springs,  
That makes her lov’d at home, rever’d abroad :  
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,  
‘An honest man ’s the noblest work of God’;  
And certes, in fair virtue’s heavenly road,  
The cottage leaves the palace far behind ;  
What is a lordling’s pomp? a cumbrous load,  
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,  
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refin’d !”

**TARBOLTON.**

**[ 70 ]**





## ON THE FAIL.

“ **Y**E banks, and braes, and streams around  
The Castle o’ Montgomery !  
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,  
Your waters never drumlie :  
There Simmer first unfald her robes,  
And there the langest tarry ;  
For there I took the last Farewel  
O’ my sweet Highland Mary.

“ How sweetly bloomed the gay green birk,  
How rich the hawthorn’s blossom,  
As underneath their fragrant shade,  
I clasp’d her to my bosom !  
The golden Hours, on angel wings,  
Flew o’er me and my Dearie ;  
For dear to me, as light and life,  
Was my sweet Highland Mary.”



**ON THE FAIL.**

**[ 74 ]**





OLD MASONIC LODGE, TARBOLTON.

“ **A** DIEU ! a heart-warm, fond adieu ;  
Dear brothers of the *mystic tie* !  
Ye favour'd, ye *enlighten'd* few,  
Companions of my social joy ;  
Tho' I to foreign lands must hie,  
Pursuing Fortune's slidd'ry ba',  
With melting heart, and brimful eye,  
I 'll mind you still, tho' far awa'.

“ Oft have I met your social band,  
And spent the cheerful, festive night ;  
Oft, honour'd with supreme command,  
Presided o'er the *sons of light* :  
And by that *hieroglyphic* bright,  
Which none but *Craftsmen* ever saw !  
Strong Mem'ry on my heart shall write  
Those happy scenes when far awa'.”

**OLD MASONIC LODGE, TARBOLTON.**

**[ 78 ]**





## WILLIE'S MILL.

“ **T**HE clachan yill had made me canty,  
I was na fou, but just had plenty ;  
I stacher'd whiles, but yet took tent aye  
To free the ditches ;  
An' hillocks, stanes, and bushes, kenn'd aye  
Frae ghaists an' witches.

“ The rising moon began to glowre  
The distant Cumnock hills out-owre :  
To count her horns, wi' a' my pow'r,  
I set mysel' ;  
But whether she had three or four,  
I cou'd na tell.

“ I was come round about the hill,  
An' todlin down on Willie's mill,  
Setting my staff wi' a' my skill,  
To keep me sicker ;  
Tho' leeward whiles, against my will,  
I took a bicker.”



**WILLIE'S MILL.**

**[ 82 ]**





A SEAT NEAR WILLIE'S MILL.

“ ‘ WHEEL, weel ! ’ says I, ‘ a bargain be ’t ;  
Come, gie ’s your hand, an’ sae we ’re  
gree ’t ;

We ’ll ease our shanks an’ tak a seat—

Come, gie’s your news ;

This while ye hae been mony a gate,

At mony a house.’ ”

“ ‘ Ay, ay ! ’ quo’ he, an’ shook his head,

‘ It ’s e’en a lang, lang time indeed

Sin’ I began to nick the thread,

An’ choke the breath :

Folk maun do something for their bread,

An’ sae maun *Death.*’ ”





**BURNS'S SEAT, NEAR WILLIE'S MILL.**

**[ 86 ]**







MOSSGIEL.

“ **O** LEAVE novels, ye Mauchline belles,  
Ye 're safer at your spinning wheel ;  
Such witching books are baited hooks  
For rakish rooks like Rob Mossziel.

. . . . .

“ Beware a tongue that 's smoothly hung,  
A heart that warmly seems to feel ;  
That feeling heart but acts a part—  
'T is rakish art in Rob Mossziel.”

**MOSSGIEL.**

**[ 90 ]**





THE COWGATE, MAUCHLINE.

“ **N**OW a’ the congregation o’er  
Is silent expectation ;  
For Moodie speels the holy door,  
Wi’ tidings o’ damnation :  
Should *Hornie*, as in ancient days,  
’Mang sons o’ God present him,  
The vera sight o’ Moodie’s face,  
To ’s ain het hame had sent him  
Wi’ fright that day.

. . . . .

“ But hark ! the tent has changed its voice ;  
There ’s peace an’ rest nae langer :  
For a’ the real judges rise,  
They canna sit for anger,  
Smith opens out his cauld harangues,  
On practice and on morals ;  
An’ aff the godly pour in thrangs,  
To gie the jars an’ barrels  
A lift that day.

. . . . .



## **The Cowgate, Mauchline**

**“ In guid time comes an antidote  
Against sic poison'd nostrum ;  
For Peebles, frae the water-fit,  
Ascends the holy rostrum :  
See, up he 's got the Word o' God,  
An' meek an' mim has viewed it,  
While Common Sense has ta'en the road,  
An' aff, an' up the Cowgate,  
Fast, fast that day.”**



**THE COWGATE, MAUCHLINE**

**[ ٦٥ ]**





POOSIE NANSIE'S.

“ **W**HEN lyart leaves bestrew the yird,  
Or wavering like the bauckie-bird,  
Bedim cauld Boreas' blast ;  
When hailstones drive wi' bitter skyte,  
And infant frosts begin to bite,  
In hoary cranreuch drest ;  
Ae night, at e'en, a merry core  
O' randie, gangrel bodies,  
In Poosie Nansie's held the splore,  
To drink their orra duddies ;  
Wi' quaffing and laughing,  
They ranted an' they sang,  
Wi' jumping an' thumping,  
The vera girdle rang.”

**"POOSIE NANSIE'S."**

**[ 100 ]**





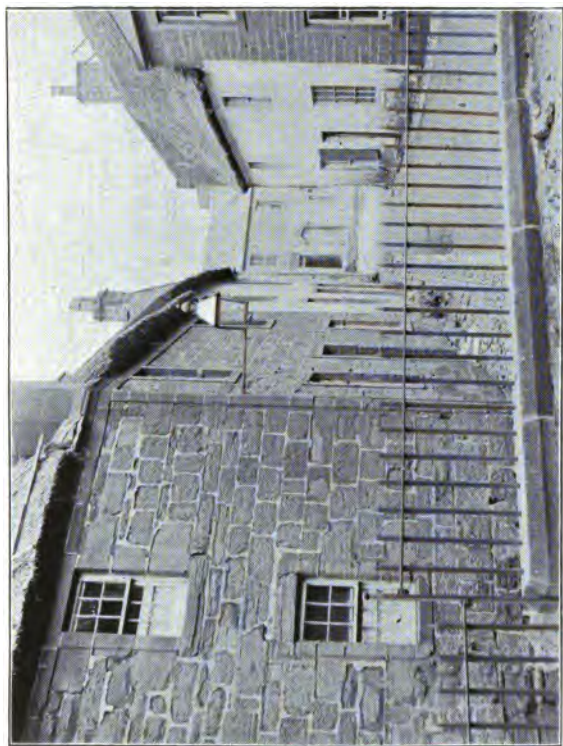
NANCE TINNOCK'S.

**T**ELL yon guid bluid o' auld Boconnock's,  
I 'll be his debt twa mashlum bonnocks,  
An' drink his health in auld Nance Tinnock's,  
Nine times a week,  
If he some scheme, like tea an' winnocks,  
Wad kindly seek."



**NANCE TINNOCK'S.**

**[ 104 ]**





## MAUCHLINE CASTLE.

(The Home of Gavin Hamilton.)

“ I WILL not wind a lang conclusion,  
With complimentary effusion ;  
But whilst your wishes and endeavours  
Are blest with Fortune’s smiles and favours,  
I am, dear Sir, with zeal most fervent,  
Your much indebted, humble servant.

“ But if (which Powers above prevent !)  
That iron-hearted carl, Want,  
Attended, in his grim advances  
By sad mistakes, and black mischances,  
While hopes, and joys, and pleasures fly him,  
Make you as poor a dog as I am,  
Your, humble servant, then no more ;  
For who would humbly serve the poor ?  
But, by a poor man’s hopes in Heav’n !  
While recollection’s pow’r is giv’n,  
If, in the vale of humble life,  
The victim sad of fortune’s strife,  
I, thro’ the tender gushing tear,  
Should recognise my master dear ;  
If friendless, low, we meet together,  
Then, Sir, your hand—my friend and brother !”

**MAUCHLINE CASTLE.**





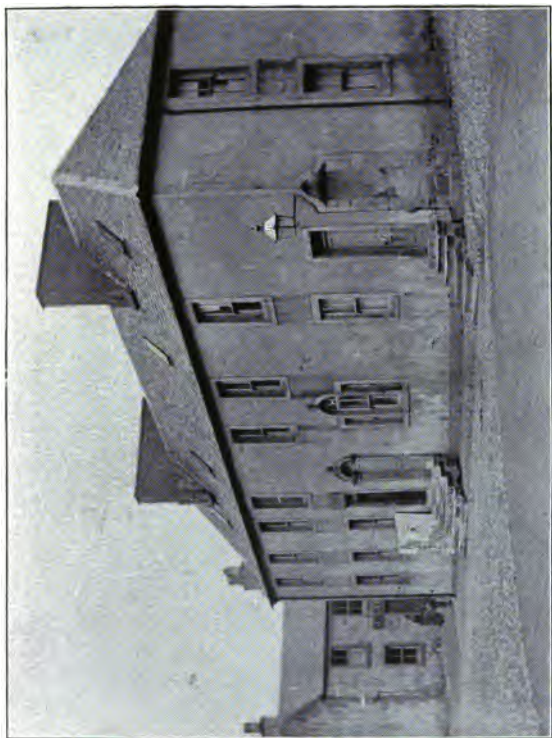
## THE MORISONS' HOME, MAUCHLINE.

“ **O** MARY, at thy window be,  
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour !  
Those smiles and glances let me see,  
That make the miser's treasure poor :  
How blithely wad I bide the stour,  
A weary slave frae sun to sun,  
Could I the rich reward secure,  
The lovely Mary Morison.”



**THE MORISONS' HOME, MAUCHLINE.**

**[ 112 ]**





TO MARY IN HEAVEN.

“ **S**TILL, o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,  
And fondly broods with miser-care !  
Time but th' impression stronger makes,  
As streams their channels deeper wear,  
My Mary, dear departed shade !  
Where is thy place of blissful rest ?  
Seest thou thy lover lowly laid ?  
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ? ”

**MARY MORISON'S TOMB.**

**[ 116 ]**





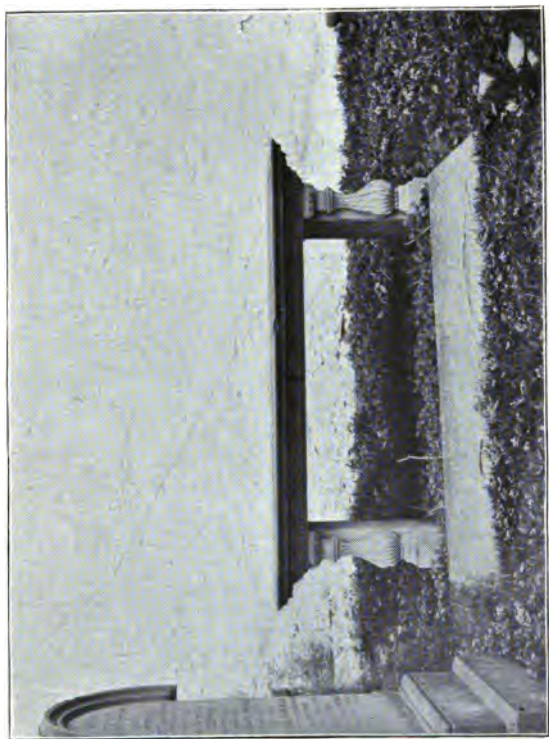
“DADDY AULD’S” TOMB.

“**D**ADDY AULD ! Daddy Auld,  
There ’s a tod in the fauld,  
A tod meikle waur than the clerk ;  
Though ye do little skaith,  
Ye ’ll be in at the death,  
For gif ye canna bite, ye may bark,  
Daddy Auld ! Gif ye canna bite, ye may bark.”



**‘DADDY AULD’S” TOMB.**

**[ 120 ]**





“HOLY WILLIE’S” TOMB.

“**H**ERE Holy Willie’s sairworn clay  
Taks up its last abode ;  
His saul has ta’en some other way,  
I fear, the left-hand road.

“ Stop ! there he is, as sure ’s a gun,  
Poor, silly body, see him ;  
Nae wonder he ’s as black ’s the grun,  
Observe wha’s standing wi’ him.

“ Your brunstane devilship, I see,  
Has got him there before ye ;  
But haud your nine-tail cat a wee,  
Till ance ye ’ve heard my story.

“ Your pity I will not implore,  
For pity ye have nane ;  
Justice, alas ! has gi’en him o’er,  
And mercy’s day is gane.

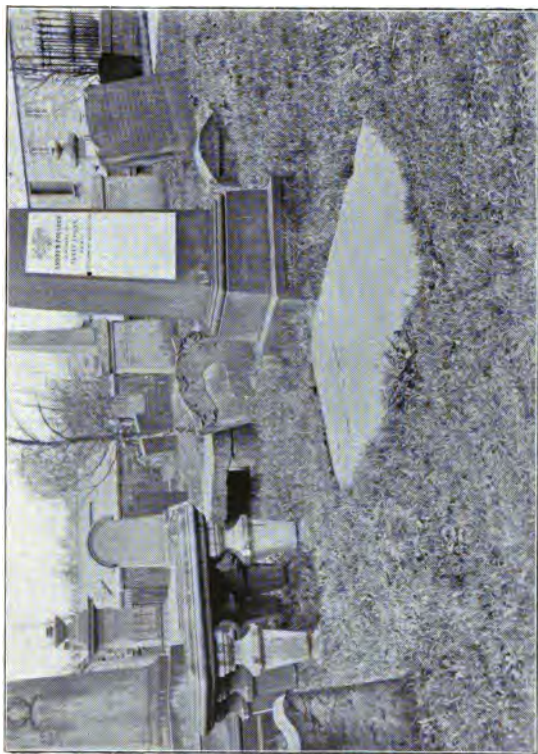


## **"Holy Willie's" Tomb**

**" But here me, Sir, de'il as ye are,  
Look something to your credit ;  
A coof like him wad stain your name,  
If it were kent ye did it."**

**"HOLY WILLIE'S" TOMB.**

**[ 126 ]**





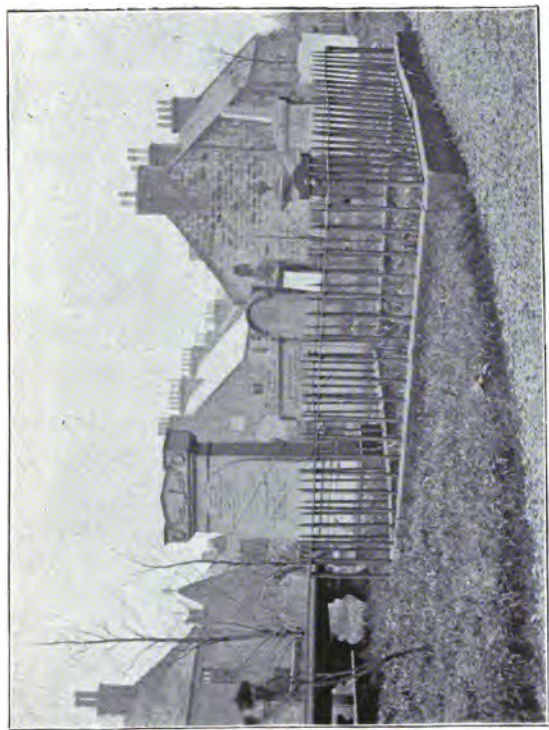


GAVIN HAMILTON'S LAIR.

“**T**HE poor man weeps—here Gavin sleeps,  
Whom canting wretches blam'd ;  
But with such as he, where'er he be,  
May I be sav'd or damned !”

**GAVIN HAMILTON'S LAIR.**

**[ 130 ]**





## BURIAL-PLACE OF THE ALEXANDERS.

(The heroine of *The Lass o' Ballochmyle* was a  
Miss Alexander.)

“ FAIR is the morn in flowery May,  
And sweet is night in autumn mild ;  
When roving thro' the garden gay,  
Or wand'ring in the lonely wild :  
But woman, nature's darling child !  
There all her charms she does compile ;  
Even there her other works are foil'd  
By the bonie lass o' Ballochmyle.

“ O ! had she been a country maid,  
And I the happy country swain,  
Tho' sheltered in the lowest shed  
That ever rose on Scotland's plain !  
Thro' weary winter's wind and rain,  
With joy, with rapture, I would toil ;  
And nightly to my bosom strain  
The bonie lass o' Ballochmyle.”

**BURIAL-PLACE OF THE ALEXANDERS.**



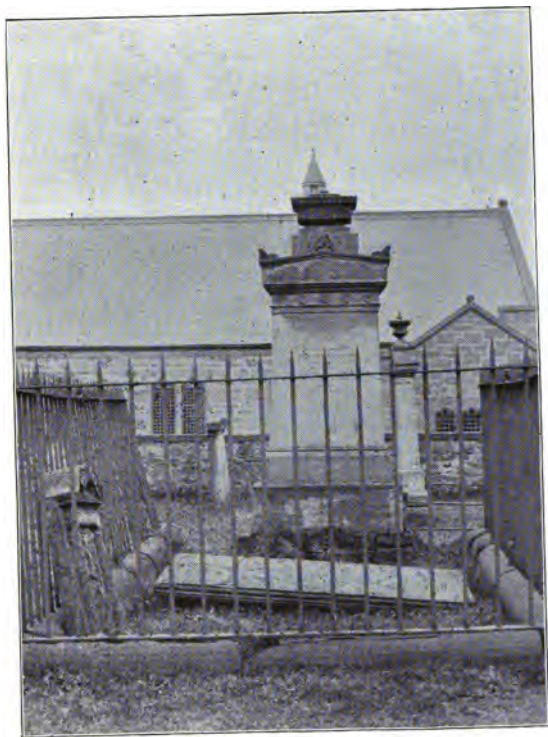




## DEATH.

“ **A**ND thou grim Pow’r by life abhorr’d,  
While life a pleasure can afford,  
Oh ! hear a wretch’s pray’r !  
Nor more I shrink appall’d, afraid ;  
I court, I beg thy friendly aid,  
To close this scene of care !  
When shall my soul, in silent peace,  
Resign life’s joyless day—  
My weary heart its throbbings cease,  
Cold mould’ring in the clay ?  
No fear more, no tear more,  
To stain my lifeless face,  
Enclaspèd and graspèd,  
Within thy cold embrace ! ”

**THE ARMOURS' GRAVE.**





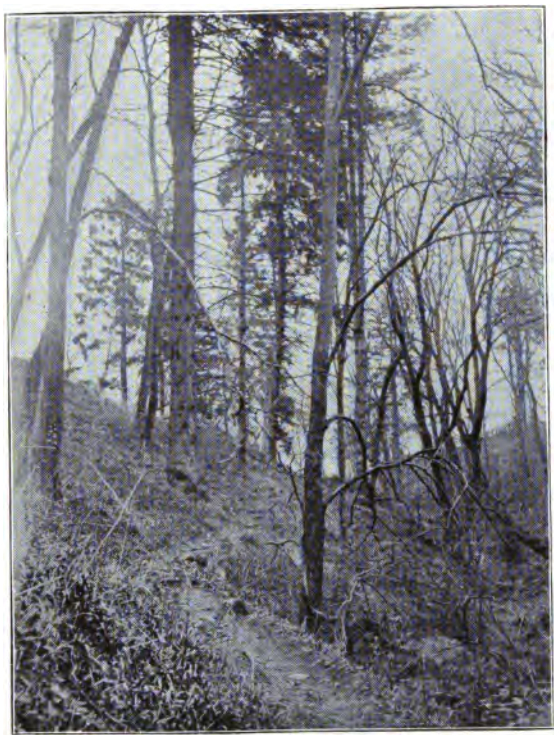
THE BRAES OF BALLOCHMYLE.

“ **T**HE Catrine woods were yellow seen,  
The flowers decayed on Catrine lee,  
Nae lav’rock sang on hillock green,  
But nature sickened on the e’e.  
Thro’ faded groves Maria sang,  
Hersel’ in beauty’s bloom the while;  
And aye the wild-wood echoes rang,  
Fareweel the braes o’ Ballochmyle !

“ Low in your wintry beds, ye flowers,  
Again ye ’ll flourish fresh and fair ;  
Ye birdies dumb, in with’ring bowers,  
Again ye ’ll charm the vocal air.  
But here, alas ! for me nae mair  
Shall birdie charm or floweret smile ;  
Fareweel the bonnie banks of Ayr,  
Fareweel, fareweel, sweet Ballochmyle ! ”

**THE BRAES OF BALLOCHMYLE.**

**[ 142 ]**







## THE BANKS OF AYR.

“ **T**HE Autumn mourns her rip’ning corn  
By early Winter’s ravage torn ;  
Across her placid, azure sky,  
She sees the scowling tempest fly :  
Chill runs my blood to hear it rave ;  
I think upon the stormy wave,  
Where many a danger I must dare,  
Far from the bonie banks of Ayr.

“ ’T is not the surging billow’s roar,  
’T is not that fatal, deadly shore ;  
Tho’ death in every shape appear,  
The wretched have no more to fear :  
But round my heart the ties are bound,  
That heart transpierc’d with many a wound ;  
These bleed afresh, those ties I tear,  
To leave the bonie banks of Ayr.



## **The Banks of Ayr**

**" Farewell, old Coila's hills and dales,  
Her heathy moors and winding vales ;  
The scenes where wretched Fancy roves,  
Pursuing past, unhappy loves !  
Farewell, my friends ! farewell, my foes !  
My peace with these, my love with those :  
The bursting tears my heart declare—  
Farewell, the bonie banks of Ayr ! "**

**THE BANKS OF AYR.**

**[ 148 ]**









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